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Oral history interview with Monica Borglum
Davies, 1990 May 8-August 27

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Monica Borglum Davies on May 8, May 20, and August 27, 1990. The interview took place in Wilton, Connecticut, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ROBERT F. BROWN: —the great sculptor Solon Borglum. We're in Silvermine, Wilton, Connecticut, and this is May 8, 1990. Robert Brown, the interviewer.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: That's right—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —talk about some of your earlier childhood memories, perhaps with an emphasis on your parents and what they nowadays call lifestyle, perhaps some of the artists you might—who were friends and associates of theirs. Where were you born? Were you—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in the city, but I was born in my mother's bed. And they lived there about, I think, oh, just a year or so, and then moved out gradually in this direction, New Rochelle, Rye, and different areas. But my mother and father had a little girl who died in New York at the age of, oh, about five, I think. And so, Mother was very intent upon getting out of the city, and Father, of course, was delighted, because he didn't like the city. He was a country man.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, he didn't. Your mother, on the other hand, liked—had liked the city until then, hadn't she?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, she did. Oh, yes. When they once did finally settle here in the country, she had to go to New York every winter for about 10 days. [00:02:00] I can remember Father—I think Father was very remarkable, and I wish that young couples were more like them. He used to notice that Mother, in the winter, she'd get so irritable, you know, nervous. And he was perfectly frank about it. He said, "Emma, I think it's time for you to go to New York." And she'd say, "Yes, I think so." And they kept a room on the top—in the top floor of a close friend, the Ashleys [ph], who lived in New York on—quite close to the station. What is that avenue?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Park Avenue, or?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: It's parallel to Third Avenue. It's in that area. And at that time, they had some nice old houses. So—and the Ashleys had a house, and he was a doctor, but they rented this room to my parents. It was always available, so that if my father was in New York and couldn't get a train back, if he had to be there late—they didn't have—I think the midnight train, the last one was about 11:30, and sometimes he might have had to stay into New York. So he was able to go to that room and spend the night. And Mother would go there. So Father knew when it got to a point when Mother just couldn't stand the country anymore, she would go there. And she would always laugh. [00:03:57] Mother had a great sense of humor, and she never took herself seriously. She was always making fun of herself. So she would say, "Oh, yes, we—Solon took me to the station right away, because I had to get to New York." And I can remember one time when we were driving to New Canaan, taking Mother to New York. She had to go to the city. And then Mother would say, "After a week in New York, I had to come back to the family [inaudible]." Father had planned, you know, for her to spend several weeks, or maybe more. And when he went into New York, he'd stop and see her, when she would be in this room at the Ashleys' house. But no, she—she had to get back to her family, and to the country. There was a family just over there—the house is still there—a little old lady whose husband drank. And every Saturday night, he'd go to the tavern. So my mother would walk through these woods. See, we were at the house back there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were just to the north of here on the road.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. She would walk—this was the woods, but there was a path that, right down to the—what used to be the sawmill, but it was swept away in that storm, oh, so many years ago. She would sit with this little missus—what was her—now I don't remember her name, but she was a sweet little lady. She—these women were all—they were—so many of them were just—they had a beautiful background. [00:05:59] But life placed them in different positions. But I can remember her husband very well, a little more than I do—

remember him, because he'd be on the road with his wagon. He would drive over there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. So, your mother was a—maybe you can describe a little of her background. She was born in Paris?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. She was a Parisian. [Dog barks.]

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —with Monica Borglum Davies in Silvermine, Connecticut. This is November 29, 1990.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —continue talking about your early recollections of living here at Silvermine, where your father and mother had a house, and he had a studio. What was sort of the routine, the family—what did your mother do, for example? What was her role?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, Mother, when she realized that she was going to be married to an artist, she did realize that the life was a little bit insecure financially. She said, and I remember so well, how excited I would be when Father got a commission. And then immediately, he would get excited, listing in his mind all the things he wanted to buy, because he now had some cash in his hand. So that, sort of, was an amusing—they never—I mean, it worked out all right in the end. [Laughs.] Mother always had a maid. She had—Father had promised her mother, my French grandmother, that he would provide a maid for her daughter, always. [00:08:05] That was a terrible thing to do—was it really—to promise. But he had to do it. And he did, really. I remember the one time when we didn't have a maid was at the time of Father's death. We had a student that wanted to live with the family, so Father had arranged with her that she could live with the family, but she would have to bear quite a lot of the kitchen work. That was not—I don't know whether that was working out or not. So I've been digressing. I must come back.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So your mother, then, was—your grandmother insisted that your mother be freed by having a maid.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And so did your mother spend—devote a lot of time to you and your brothers and sisters?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Not a great deal, no, but she devoted a lot of time to Father. Now, this building that we're sitting in here—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was a barn, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: —was the studio. And it used to be back on the road, on the lawn opposite the house, so that Father could go through a little narrow door that he made, and he could just slip into the dining room for meals without disturbing Mother if she happened to have guests in the parlor. But we—Father—there was nothing he couldn't do. He said yes to everything, and then he would figure out how to do it, and very often do it better than it was done before. [00:10:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean—you're speaking of taking care of the studio or the house?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes, and just anything. We had the horses underneath the studio, and we usually had three or four. And then we had a barnyard there. But I'm getting off the subject.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, this is good. And you used to—these were horses for driving to the railroad station or—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —driving to get groceries and things.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: That's right. We didn't have a car until 1918, when they were first—but we had a lovely team of horses for a while, and then one of them turned out to be a kicker, and he kicked Father in the chin, really—so Father sold him, and then we had our other beautiful horse that had been given to Father. I think he was a—he was a lovely trotting horse. Mr. Piccirilli—does that name mean anything?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. What's—Piccirilli, a sculptor. Yes, an Italian-born—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: An Italian. That's right. He was my godfather, and he was very close to all of us. He used to come out a lot. And he gave Father that nice horse. And it was a registered horse. It had done very well

in a—at the Madison Square Garden horse show.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, in the great horse show, yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: So Mr. Piccirilli bought it and gave it to Father. And we had him for years and years, and he's buried out in the field there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did—was this quite common? Various friends would come up from the city and visit?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. [00:12:00] We had—and when I was, sort of, a teenager and could help more—we always had a maid, because Mother had promised—Father had promised, but I did a lot of—we could see, when we were in the house, it was that field below. Everything was clean. It was a meadow where the horses grazed. And we could look right across to that little rise before—that you go down the steep hill.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. So you could see people coming—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —from quite a distance [laughs].

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And we knew we were the only people—there was another family, the Lords. He was an architect, Austin W. Lord, lived above us. But we usually knew that—because very often, their friends would take the other way to avoid this hill and all. But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You could see people coming, and—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: We could see people coming, so I'd put the kettle on, and by the time they got here, I could get a nice tray of tea, which we would—if they came late enough, we'd have it in the studio. That was the routine. Mother—Mother was often with Father in the studio.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, she was.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What would she do? Would she help in some way, or read to him, or—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: She would often read to him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: While he would be working on models, or—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. Well, over in the corner there was where the model would go and undress. And she—very often in the nude, she would just have a kind of a wide ribbon around her waist. [00:14:04] But so Mother would be there and reading to Father, or she'd just be there talking, or she would read to herself. But he liked to have her. He was—he really liked to have Mother with him all the time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And she was very supportive and very—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: She was very supportive.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —admiring of his work.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah, yeah. I remember the last time when Father went to the Stamford hospital, and Mother had made the arrangements, you see, or the doctor had. And then he looked—Father looked up at my mother and said, "You'll come with me." And she said, "Of course I will." So she went—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, they were very close. Well, now, your father's daily routine, was it—was it—would he rise quite early?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Five o'clock. Before—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ah. And then he would go to the studio fairly soon?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: He'd make coffee. Put a coffee pot on, and he'd usually shake the fire down for the maid, so that when she got up, the kitchen was nice and warm. He'd come over here, and there was a big potbellied stove that was the biggest one you could get. And it was, you know, about here. Then I remember that grill over there, that reminds me of the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Like a furnace grill.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there a furnace in it?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: At one time, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So he would get things ready very early.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then he'd have—would he go back and have breakfast at the house?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. [00:15:59] We had bre—but he always put that pot of coffee on, so he could get a pot—it wasn't good for him, and Mother didn't like it, and she was always trying to get it away from him [laughs], but he had a friend, the Millars [ph]. He was a bit down the road. And if he didn't get coffee at home, he'd go down to the Millars [laughs] for a cup of coffee. And so that was one of the little arguments in the family.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So about—then about what time would he start work, start his working on his sculpture, roughly speaking?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, he would—five o'clock was his rising hour. And he had a rule that you feed the animals before you eat your breakfast. So he'd come down to the stable under the studio. He'd shake up the furnace here, because it was down in the stable. He'd feed the horses and the cow. We had a cow, usually. Come back to the kitchen, have some coffee. And I don't know—we had our breakfast about a quarter after seven, because we had to be in school, picked up and all that. But Mother was—Mother rarely got down at that time. And I think Father didn't really expect her, even really want her to come, because the breakfast was always a hasty dish of oatmeal and coffee and toast.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then do you recall, sometimes, what he would do when he would come over to the studio? Do you recall what might be a typical day? [00:18:00] Let's say when you weren't in school. There must have been sometimes you came and hung around the studio a bit.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, yes, I guess so. He always had a student helper who slept up in that little room up there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, up in, like, a loft, almost, in the barn.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah, uh-huh [affirmative]. And so—but Father was up before that student helper. And he usually got up in time—if Father had had an early, like, five o'clock or 5:30 breakfast by himself—very often he'd get it himself. He'd be ahead of the maid. And then later, when the maid got around and made breakfast for the family, he would be over here, and I remember Steve, for years, he was one of his student helpers that Father had, would bring over a tray of breakfast. It was not rigid. I mean, it just all depended.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Was Steve a sculptor, too?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: He was learning.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Learning.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he go on to become a sculptor?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. He was a boy. He was a Hungarian. But he was with us quite a long time, because he really thought he was preparing. And then [laughs] one of the last things—I think I must have been around 17, I think. But he told me he wanted to marry me. [00:19:59] [Laughs.] I had a saddle in my hand at the time. I was going to saddle the horse. And I threw the saddle at him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You threw the saddle at him?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: [They laugh.] Isn't that awful? Terrible.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was his last name, do you recall? Steve's last name?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: No. But he was—he was a—I don't know. He told mother that he was—what is it, a Magyar?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Magyar, yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Something like that. But that didn't mean anything to us, and it meant less than nothing to me or Father, because when I told Father that—I told Father everything. I told him that Steve wanted marry me. Steve left the next day. Never saw him again. So that was that. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. At one point, maybe it was a little too early for you to remember, but I noted that Paul Manship was a pupil of your father's.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you recall him at all?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he like as a young man?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, he was very nice. Of course, I was very little at the time. And when we met years later, he said to me, "Monica, what do you remember about me?" Well, I said, "I remember that you used to take me piggyback." I loved it. He would take me on his shoulders, I think, carry me all over the place. We've been—got in touch with them, and I was in touch with Isabel, his wife. And then the children also. John Manship is—if he's still alive—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He is. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: He's just the age of my son, Harold. [00:21:56] And we used to see them quite frequently at the Cape, when we'd go up to Cape Ann, to Gloucester. And there's a place, a little town—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, yes. Lanesville.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Lanesville, yes. I knew everybody in Lanesville at one time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But Manship was always quite pleasant and cordial, was he, to you?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had benefited quite a lot from his studying with your father, I suppose. That had been rather important to him, I suppose, studying, yeah.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, I—we didn't talk about it—but, no, it—it—I haven't really thought about that recently, but John Manship—Paul Manship was his father's name, isn't that right?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, and it was Paul who was here.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And his wife, Isabel. Well, we saw them quite frequently, my husband and I, even when we were in New York. We used to go, and they had an apartment in downtown, Greenwich Village somewhere, where we would often go. They'd have a party. And they had another—there was a restaurant somewhere there where everybody went. And I remember he took me there, recently, and Mervyn, too, I guess. So I must come back to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —your father's routine. Yes. The father's day.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Father's routine. I think he did have a routine. It was always to get up early, which meant around five o'clock. He'd come out. He'd take care of the furnaces. Go down to the basement and shake down that furnace, and get the kitchen coal stove going, and then come out here and get this potbellied stove. [00:24:07]

ROBERT F. BROWN: When he was out—when he was in his studio, did he spend a great deal of time—you mentioned drawing from the model. Would he frequently have a model here to—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: We almost always had a model.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And was that sort—did he do that when he had a commission in mind, or just to, sort of, keep his studies going? Was he always studying? Did you have that impression?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: He was always studying, and he—it didn't matter whether he had a commission or not. In fact, I know Mother used to say that sometimes she would think, well, when he didn't have a commission, he'd be a little free, but he wasn't. He was awfully busy—you've probably seen the book he wrote, *Sound Construction*.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was very industrious. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yeah. Well, I can remember when these walls, all around the two walls, were covered with these drawing papers, and that was the beginning of the book, because when he died quite suddenly, they just were able to take these down and really—they must be somewhere, but I don't know where. I want to find them, the originals.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, during an average day, would people drop in, or did they know, if he was working in his studio, would people, sort of, stay away?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: They never dared to come in before tea time, which would be around 3:30 or four. [00:25:57] And I can remember people just never came. And one man did come, and—about 10 o'clock, and that was very unusual. And I can remember Mother looking out of the window, "Who can he be, coming, and he's going straight to the studio?" And otherwise, she might have—if he'd come to the house, she would have said, "Well, come back this afternoon." He went straight to the studio. And do you want me to digress a minute and tell you why?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yep, why?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, because his daughter and I played together. She was a little older than I, but at that time, I think, she—that's it.

[Audio Break.]

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: He turned out—the man on the way to the studio [laughs] turned out to be Johnny Gruelle. That's a familiar name, I'm sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Johnny Gruelle.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Gruelle. He was a neighbor of ours, and really just lived just down the road. And he was coming that early—I've got to remember this correctly—because his daughter, Marcella, and I had played the day before in our woods, right down through there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], all over to the east, yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And I had taken her, as I very often did take friends, down into the woods to show them a tree. It was an old tree that was hollow in the middle. [00:28:03] And it had a lot of bumps all over it, and it was just a fascinating, funny old tree, like an old man that, you know, didn't belong to this generation. That tree, my father had called the Twee Deedle tree, because Mr. Twee Deedle lived in that tree. Now, it's a whole 'nother story to tell you who Mr. Twee Deedle was. He was our little friend, our little gnome. Father had invented him, a little fairy. A man, always a little man. And he lived in that tree. And to go down to that tree through the woods, down through there, with my father—I can remember it as being one of the most exciting happenings, because Father was a busy man, and I felt, well, if he's taking us down to see Mr. Twee Deedle, it must be very important. And Father could make up stories as he went along. I don't know whether the Danes are able to do that, whether he got that from his family, the Danish, but he could make up stories. He had our minds so filled with [laughs] possibilities that by the time we got there, we practically saw Twee Deedle in the tree, but we didn't. [00:29:59] We just heard him. And if there was a leaf that moved, there he is, back of that leaf, or he's somewhere there. Or if there was a little noise, Father would say, "Shh, that's Twee Deedle." And so that old tree—Paul even—my brother and I had a great, almost reverence for the tree. And I remember when he built his house not awfully far, he came to me and asked me, "What about the tree?" And I don't remember now what he did do with it, if it was cut down or not, but that was something that was really almost sacred to the family. So Mr. Gruelle, that was the father of Marcella Gruelle, who had gone down through the woods to see Twee Deedle. He came to speak to Father, and nobody ever came in the morning, because Father could be very nasty to people who came around in the morning. You had to leave him alone until at least lunchtime. And Mr. Gruelle told Father about the trip that his daughter and I had had down through the woods. Evidently, we really—it was very dramatic, because Mr. Gruelle's mind just grew and grew and grew. And he said to Father, "Mr. Borglum, there's going to be a competition." [00:31:57] And I forget the newspaper, but I think it was the *Tribune*. I could look it up. They were giving a prize of, I don't know, maybe several thousand dollars and the commission, to carry on Buster Brown, because the story of Buster Brown, they felt, was exhausted. It had been a page story for years and years and years, international. So they wanted Mr. Twee Deedle to take its place, for a certain amount of money and so on. So Father said, "Oh, of course." And I don't think he ever saw any money, [laughs] but anyway, he gave the idea. And for a number of years, Twee Deedle was on a full page on the *Tribune*. The only thing is, as being closely related to Twee Deedle as I am, he changed. He became more like—I don't know—a little fairy. I suppose other people might think that he was a fairy, but we didn't. He was Twee Deedle. And so that—but it did last for years and years. I think that's—covers—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] What did your father think of what became of Mr. Twee Deedle?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, of course, he wasn't our Twee Deedle. And he became—he became too personalized, I think. I may have some—we kept a lot of those sheets. It was a full sheet. [00:34:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: So your father was very busy, but he had a good deal of time to encourage the imaginative life of you children.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. Yes. Well, at lunch, we were always together at lunch. Not always at dinner, because the family usually had their dinner later, and we children, when we were children, had dinner around five o'clock, I think. But it was lunch. And I think my father liked to break off from his work, because he'd—he'd gotten up early in the morning, and well, I know he used to make fun of my mother sometimes. He'd say, "I've done a day's work before Mother comes down for breakfast." She would come down and—and I don't think that was an exaggeration, because your best work is when you first come, when you first start. And he used to have probably a couple of hours in the studio all by himself. And then—though he never—Mother never let anybody into the studio. Even this [laughs] Johnny Gruelle got in, but [laughs]—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So he would join you at lunch.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he ever talk at lunch about what he had been doing?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I don't believe so, because we children were there, and he was very thoughtful for our welfare, and he would talk to Mother in the studio in the afternoon. That would be when—and before the maid—the student, our student helper, would go and get the tea tray. [00:36:00] I made an awful faux pas, because this was a very proud student helper, a Hungarian. And I remember when he came through—they had a little secret door there—came through here carrying this tray. And I was just a child. I didn't know any better. And I said, "Oh, look, it's Steve. He's like the servant." [Laughs.] Because I thought, you know, the servant would bring the tray in. That was the most awful faux pas. I had to apologize to Steve, because he was furious, he told Mervyn. I don't know why he should be. I wouldn't mind being called a servant, if I came in carrying the tea tray. [Laughs.] Anyway, that's—that's just, kind of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you recall times that clients for your father's sculpture came here? Were there times when people who were interested in his—or had commissioned work from him, would they sometimes come here to Silvermine?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. Oh, yes, they'd sometimes—took a place for the summer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you recall their coming to visit sometimes, some of them?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, I really—let's see. The [John B.] Gordon monument.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In Atlanta, Georgia.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, you see, Father went down there, but they did come up. They did. They came up when the studio was not here, but Father was in New Rochelle. But of course, I was only a couple of years old. I don't remember that. But I know there's a reference to that somewhere. [00:37:59]

ROBERT F. BROWN: What would—but there were—in Silvermine, there were various other families that you were close there, weren't there?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Weren't there some other artists?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. Well, Father worked—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you mention some?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. Probably if there are any important ones, I'll probably forget them. But Father started that—he had an exhibition here the year after he bought the place, and then every year after that, and they got bigger and bigger. Now, the artists, there was Frank [Townsend] Hutchens, who was a painter, and there was Addison T. Millar.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Also a painter.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Also a painter. In fact, he was, I think I could say, Father's closest friend. In fact, when he came to Silvermine, he didn't have the money to buy a place, and Father bought it, this place down where my sister-in-law Harriet lives now. And it's on the water. It's a lovely little cottage, one floor, very nice. But it's been rebuilt since. But Father made a shagbark cottage with Mr. Millar. Told him how to do it, and the two of them worked together on that house, because he wanted Addison T. Millar—he felt that—well, he was a very distinguished, internationally-known artist at that time. And so Father did everything possible to get him to be able to come out here. And then—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you recall what he—can you describe what Millar was like—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —as you remember him? [00:40:00]

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. I—I have a picture somewhere. But he was a light built man. He wasn't rugged. He was—and he—beside his painting, he made etchings, and—is that what you have a machine to stamp down? Well, he had one of those. In fact, I think it still exists somewhere. And he was a close friend of Father's. In those days, they always used the last name. They didn't say "Mr." or, they didn't say, like, Addison. Father called him Millar, and he called Father Borglum. And that was just—I don't know when they changed or why, [laughs] but they—let's see. Some of the others. There were lots of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But they would get together, these people, once in a while?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. Ed Ash, he didn't live in Silvermine. He was really out of bounds, but he was a very active man, and he came over in a car. And he was a teacher at one of the academies. I've forgotten which. Does that name ring a bell with you, Ed Ash? He was often—now, I remember him very well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then there was Daniel Putnam Brinley, you mentioned.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes, yeah. Well, he was close. He was almost like a member of the family. He just lived down there. And Put Brinley and Hildebrandt, those two, they finally built houses of their own. Brinley's house is a beautiful, big, big place. [00:41:57] It's right out on the road on the way to the sanitarium up there, Silver Hill. And I could take you around and show you all these houses.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That would be nice. But he first came here and rented a place, or—when—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. Brinley is who we're talking about?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Brinley. Most of these men would come—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. Mr. Brinley was high. He was as tall as—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Very tall, yeah.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And they rented a little house over there. When we go down to the tavern, I'll show it to you. I'm sure he must have had to double up just to—well, that's where he—right out of the water. That was his first place. And then Hildebrandt had another house. I don't know whether it was their first place, but there was a large house that we would pass. The heart of Silvermine is really right around there. We're up on this edge, and the tavern is right there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But along the river is the heart of it, of the—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes, I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where the artists lived.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, the river is like this, and then the road up—what we called the Upper Road, in those days, would be up like that. Pick up the New Canaan-Norwalk Road, and if you go down that way, you go past the store, and then to the tavern.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And more and more—there were more and more artists, and—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —I suppose even writers, as well, people coming in.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: There were writers. Richardson Wright, now, he was a writer. Wasn't he the editor of

House and Garden?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And where the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would most of these people come in the beginning just for the summer, or were they—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh. In the early days, they came for weekends. [00:44:00] They didn't even stay through the week.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And would they board with somebody here usually, or—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. There was one place. Mrs. Aiken [ph], she—Father was the one who started this. She lost her husband and didn't have any money, but she had these boys and a lot of cows, so Father said, "Well, get your boys working with these cows, and start up a dairy." And so she delivered—they delivered milk for years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And she took boarders, too. Is that—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And she took boarders. Now, that's a big house. It's still—you can see it down there. She is the only one that I think of at the moment, because in New Canaan—anybody with a car could go to New Canaan and stay at the Ardsley Inn or the Melba Inn. The Melba survives. But at that time, they very often—people who came up with—wealthy people with servants, they put the servants at the Melba Inn, and they stayed at the Ardsley. [They laugh.] But, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Let me turn this over.

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —biography of your father, he mentions that there was an informal artist's group here called the Knockers—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —which held exhibitions.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, that title just existed for a year or two, because everybody called it the Silvermine Group of Artists. So finally, they said, Well, we're the Silvermine Group of Artists [laughs]. They dropped the Knockers Club. But the idea was the same, that they were—and I know this. They—the men would come every Sunday morning with their latest paintings, or others that they wanted criticized. And there was a stand, and the painting could be put on that stand, and then the artists would be standing around, and they would criticize it. I don't know what—I think that was Father's idea, that you just had to be big enough in spirit to receive criticism. Some of the newcomers didn't realize that. They felt, well, we already know. We've exhibited in New York. We don't have to have criticism. And Father said, "No, you have to take the criticism." I think he was taking that idea from Europe, the—what is the name of the—there is a place. I don't get it right now, but—where they do congregate like that. There was, at that time. And I think Father felt, well, Silvermine is an ideal place for friends to get together and show their work. [00:01:58] And it really—it worked, because he—and then they had exhibits at the end of the summer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where did they do this?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Right here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, at the studio?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. And then Mother and their wives served tea in that little room, and they used that samovar. And I remember my mother—oh. You know, to start it, well, Father, I think, would put charcoal and a little kerosene or something like that, alcohol, maybe. But he started it outside on the lawn, and didn't bring it into the studio until it was going nicely. And that held 30 cups of hot water, so Mother would have a very big teapot with strong tea. And they served the tea in the little room there. And that—I think that was—they didn't charge anything. In fact, I think that was one of the characteristics of the Silvermine Group of Artists. Many of them were poor. But the point is they got—came together, and they criticized each other's work, and the wives served the tea, and there was no money at all passed among them. I think it was good, because I know that when Father died, when the thing ended, and the Guild here started up, immediately you were paying, you know, a dollar or whatever it was. You had to pay to join, and—but they didn't have that at all during those early days.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Guild is in no sense the successor of the Silvermine Group. [00:04:01] It doesn't—there's no relation.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, nothing except when the last exhibit took place, something like 1922 or something. I have the date somewhere. In the fall of that year—Father died in January, and then it ended, and then in the fall of that year, the Guild started. So you see, there was a—a nice group of artists knit together already. It was inevitable that they would do that, that they would form a—and it—of course, they did a lot of—had to differently, because you had to pay to go to the Guild. There were—our group had grown quite large, so that actually, one or two people in the group felt, I think, that maybe this studio was too small or too modest to carry on the work. And Mr. Gutmann, Bernhard Gutmann, had the—built that large house. There was a big studio room there. He and others—the Brinleys, had a large studio room in the building, but I know my father laughed at Put Brinley and said, "You know, you're not going to work in this room." And Put Brinley said, "Well, I'm building it for myself." And he—Father said, "No. [00:05:59] You're going to have to have a little building out in the woods there somewhere, where you could throw paint around, and on yourself, and—[laughs] but you can't paint in this." And it turned out to be that way, that you would see his little place, but the very elegant, beautiful house that he built is lovely, Put Brinley.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It seems from what you've said that your father was the leader among these artists.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, he was, I think. I think that that was—I—I—I'm sure that there must have been some who felt competitive, because we were very modest in everything that we did. We didn't have very much money. Anyway, Father didn't believe in having one's place a showy place. He left his studio just—really, just as it is. He didn't have that, because at that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The large fireplace?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: No, the fireplace was in that little room.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where you had tea. Yeah.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. Those were the last carvings that Father did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These magnificent ones of the young pioneers.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: They were—yeah. They were for the house that—the fireplace of the house.

ROBERT F. BROWN: To flank the fireplace. Now, were—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: It was a smaller fireplace in the house.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were there other—some other sculptors among this Silvermine Group?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: There may have been. I think there was about—there were about two, chiefly painters, however. [00:07:58] And I can't remember the sculptors, but I know there was one who lived down there on the way to Norwalk. And I don't think there were more than about two, but most of them were painters. And painters of national—national—what is the word? Position.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did—sometimes, do you recall other sculptors coming here to visit, or would stop by to see your father?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Some fairly well-known sculptors, sometimes?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. Well, lots of times. Sunday afternoon was Mother's day at home. In those days, you had a [inaudible] at home so we were always home on Sunday afternoon. And I would usually make the tea. But we had—actually, Father had a lot of friends that were just dropping in, regardless of Sunday, any day.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember—you've said that your father was friends with some other sculptors, like Daniel Chester French, for example.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, Daniel Chester French had his studio in—where was it?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, there's one way up in Massachusetts, Stockbridge.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. Well, that's where he was. So he—but we knew him. Father—French, yeah.

What was I going to say? Oh. Oh, dear.

[Audio Break.]

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: —it was always an exciting time to me. I loved it. And they had tea out here, or they'd have tea in the house, in the living room. It just depended. If Father was working, he didn't like much to have Mother have a gathering like that, because we'd usually light that samovar, and use it. But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But Sundays were a time when—he didn't usually work on Sundays, did he? Or did he?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: No, he didn't. No. But he always had that Sunday morning artists' meeting here in the studio. That's where they criticized each other's work. I think that's taken from the French. I think one—because you see, Father had lived in France. He lived in Paris, I think, five years, and then went back again. So he was very at home. [Laughs.] Except his French was terrible. [They laugh.] Mother said, "Don't speak French in front of my mother." Because her mother would be so shocked, because Father's French had been learned in the stables, [laughs] because he'd—horses, you know. He was often using horses to work.

ROBERT F. BROWN: For studies, and—yeah, yeah.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you recall members of—other Borglums coming here, visiting—relatives?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you describe some of them?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, I can—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That you remember when you were a young girl?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. Uncle August Borglum was the musician, and he lived in Omaha. [00:12:00] And his wife was Mother's sister.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Aunt Lucy.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Lucy, yes. They were very close. And Uncle August hadn't been close to Father, but became close because of the sisters, and they'd be alone together quite a lot. Uncle August would come over here and sit with Father. Many times, quite a few times, they spent a whole summer here. They'd rent a house in the village and spend the summer here with George Paul [ph]. They had one child, whose name was George Paul. Everybody called him George. He would play with my brother and me, and we grew up. We kept in touch with him as long as he lived.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, your mother and her sister were very close, weren't they?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Very close, yeah. But they didn't agree. And I can remember, they would get—start arguing in French, and they'd go like this [gestures]. Well, Mother—I don't know. I don't—maybe I'm—Mother was very democratic. While she'd been in France, which had been loyalist until just a few years before she was born, so there was an influence. But her father was a democrat. He was a minister. And by that, that he believed in democracy, not royalty. [00:13:59] But I don't know. Aunt Lucy—looking back at it as a—as an older person with years of experience, I think that both Mother and Aunt Lucy had matured a little differently. Mother matured along with Father as a, you know, believing in—completely in democracy, and not having royalty. I think Aunt Lucy sometimes would like to think in terms of royal families, you know, who had—it was interesting. But I think there was something of that in there. [Laughs.] I—I don't know how—but they were devoted to each other. They—oh, they loved these summers when they were all together. Mother would play the piano. Aunt Lucy—no. Aunt Lucy would play the piano. Mother would sing. Mother had a beautiful singing voice.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What sort of music did they do?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Hmm?

ROBERT F. BROWN: What sort of music did they do?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, they did the sophisticated arias, the opera. Nothing—though Father liked the simple love songs. He—I think he appreciated them more than the elegant arias and that. [They laugh.] I can see them now. [Laughs.] [00:16:00] Oh, dear me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, they must have been perfectly charming together, then, I'm sure.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: They were. Madame Borglum—everybody called Mother Madame Borglum.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was she and her sister—were they both a bit formal by American standards?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I don't think so. In fact—and yet, we lived—I don't know. The formality of the last century was disappearing at that time, and—but Mother, and Father, too, but with Father it was acquired more than natural. I mean, he was a Westerner. And he—he liked the natural way of doing things. I don't know. I think they were a wonderful couple together, because they were very different. But I don't remember ever that Mother would put Father on the spot, and I think she could have, because Mother was very, very well-educated. She had a sophistication about her that was top flight. And when she had her apartment—she used to have—a friend of ours, the Ashleys, in New York, had one of those big houses on—not on Fifth Avenue, but I think it was about over further. [00:18:02] And she rented one floor to my mother and father, so that gave Father a place to go to for the night if he happened to be stuck in New York, you know, to go to a dinner or something like that. And there were no trains after midnight, so if he didn't get that last train, he could always go to this apartment. And that—Mother gave receptions in New York. I, of course, never went to them, but she had everything done up just the way you do. She—

ROBERT F. BROWN: These would be receptions for her friends and—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Friends, and Father's friends. It was—well, that was what they did in those days. And it was not only a social thing, it was something to help show what Father was doing, because he had a studio in New York, but it was downtown. I think way downtown, about 10th Street.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you ever go to that studio?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I didn't, no. But I've been to Paul Manship's, when he was alive. He took me all through that, and—and said, "This is what sort of your place your father would have." I was very appreciative of that. He—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would your father go down there, probably, when he had special work to do? Is that why he would keep a studio in New York?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: No, I don't think—well, he may have. I don't really know. This is where he worked. But if he had to show something. [00:20:01] There were loads of people who just, at that time, wouldn't come out to the country. It's just like going out to the sticks. [They laugh.] And yet there were people who just loved the experience of coming here. I can really remember that, because it—it always surprised me, because I took it all for granted, and here was someone raving about this everyday stuff that—[they laugh].

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about your brother? Were you and your brother very close, your brother Paul?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Paul—I think we were, until we got married. That always makes a change.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was your brother inclined to follow the artistic life, or—do you know?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, not really, but I think that that talent showed itself in the fact that he was a—he could do—he was a—he could do engineering and drawing. He could—I'm trying to think of what he would draw, because he was always at a drawing board. Well, if he was building a house—he was a builder—he'd draw the whole thing out. And I don't know why. I really sort of wish he had followed. I think he could have. But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he become a builder, you say?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He became a house builder.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. His son is a builder now. They had a partner, Meek, Mr. Meek. Borglum & Meek. And that's gone on now for two generations. And actually, for a while, he was just working on old houses. He didn't like to take on the new ones. [00:22:01] But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean he would restore them, or enlarge them, or things like that?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. Well, he knew an awful lot about wood. And I can remember when we made an addition on our house down there, back on the road, he was very interested in—in the wood, because some of the wood you just have to take out, even though it seems like pretty good wood, but it's apt to be porous or something. And I—but I think Paul—and very often, as a builder, he—his sense of architecture influenced him a

lot, because he could tell one of his clients, "Now, you know, I'll do just what you want me to do, but I think that line would be better if it were lower." You know, he could say that sort of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he go on and have a little architectural training, your brother? Did he—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, I don't know. He went to Dartmouth, and then he took a postgraduate course at Cornell University, and that was in the area of architecture. He had—yes, I think that he had more than the average, that sort of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were your interests when you were, say, a teenager? Did you know what you wanted to be? Or did you think of those [laughs] things?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I just liked horses. I loved horses. [00:24:00] I had a pony. I gave riding lessons and made money that way. But I don't think—I wanted to get married. I wasn't one of the girl—many girls at that time, you know, wanted a career of their own. I never cared about that. I wanted to have a happy marriage with family and children, and the Lord has given me all of that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you go—ever go away to school?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, when I went to college, I went to Simmons College in Boston, and I was there two years. And that was a very good move for me, because Mother—it was after Father had died, and Mother was staying with an old family friend who had a big house, and she used to rent rooms occasionally. It was on West Avenue in Norwalk. So Mother went there. A friend of mine came and took my horses and kept them for me over the winter. And so I went to Simmons, and I liked it. But it was a hard-working college. It wasn't a fun college at campus. I don't know—I think they have a campus now, but I don't think they did then.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They didn't, then. What were you studying there at Simmons?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, I was studying home economics, but I was having a hard time, because I had to do chemistry, and I couldn't do that sort of thing [laughs]. [00:26:00] But anyway, I—I always say that I think Mervyn rescued me, because I don't know whether [laughs] I would ever have graduated.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, you met Mervyn at that time.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I met Mervyn—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he was, what, then—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: —after two years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —a young writer at that time, or what was he—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: No, he'd just come over from England, and he was at the British Press Service. Yes, he was writing, but, you know, press things, his impressions of this country and that sort of thing. And then he would send back cables at night to and from the company that hired him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you meet him in Boston, or New York, or—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I met him here in Silvermine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, right here you met him.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. At that time, we had the community association, the little club, Silvermine club, and we met regularly, right by the tavern. You know, there's a building down by the water. Well, I think there was another one there that's been taken away, but we met in—met in those buildings. And Harold Paget, who was an Englishman and a—a literary agent who became a very good friend of ours, lived just in that little house across the road on the water. He lived there. And he used to—at that time, Silvermine was small enough that—well, for instance, when my good-looking roommate and I came up from Boston, we went to this old friend's house in Norwalk. [00:28:08] Called Mr. Paget right away. "Oh," he said, "that's wonderful, Monica. We'll have a dance tonight." So he called two or three Yale boys who we knew, and two or three others, and got about 20 young people together, and a little three-piece orchestra, and we had a dance. That's how I met Mervyn. [Laughs.] But that's what you could do. It was really—it was just delightful. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. [Laughs.] Backtracking a little bit, did World War I make—have something of an impact on your family?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. Well, that—that came—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I mean, because your mother's French family—I mean, were your grandparents still alive in Paris?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: My grandfather was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And your uncle became a notable French general.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes, he did. But most of that came from his contribution in this country, because he had been in this country. I don't remember just when. It was before my time. But when the war came, they called him, because he was so familiar with certain aspects of this country—and at that time, we hadn't entered yet, but Europe was—and the British and the French were vying with each other for our materials. [00:30:00] So they sent Uncle Paul over. And he—he was given a—Order of the Bath by the British. The Order of the Garter is a little higher, and he didn't get that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So he got—but he got a very high order.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: But he got Order of the Bath. And he was recognized over and over. I've got some marvelous pictures of him. And he was a colonel at first, and very familiar with this country. And he was the one who stopped the British and French from competing with each other for what we had, like horses. I mean—and so Uncle Paul was able to come in there and see how many horses were needed by the British and how many by the French, and he worked a diplomatic puzzle out satisfactorily, because I—he got all kinds of honors after. And it just—he was a—he was really a—but like so many of them, I—after the war—excuse me. He died. He just had exhausted himself.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Exhaustion, yeah. Was he—did he—was he anything like your mother or your aunt in his temperament, or was he quite different?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: [Laughs.] Well, of course—I don't know. [00:32:00] The French are remarkable—I think it's a remarkable country. They can get together and they can fight. I can tell you. I can remember many times [laughs] when—I'm not thinking of Uncle Paul, or—I called her Tante Elizabeth, his wife. They had no children. But I'm thinking of Aunt Lucy and Uncle August. And Mother would go into her bed after Uncle August had gotten up, and they would talk, and talk, and talk, and talk, and on like that, and very often they'd end up with a fight, a big argument over something, because my Aunt Lucy tended to be royalist, and Mother—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, you [laughs] mentioned this, yeah—was a democrat.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But their brother, you don't recall—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, no, Uncle Paul—yes, I do, because Aunt—his wife stayed with us much of the time, because he was so busy. It was just—there wasn't much social life. Well, there was, too. I guess they were right in the social life, because I remember Aunt Elizabeth had to have a dress for every occasion, and then she'd send the extra ones to my mother. [They laugh.] But apparently you couldn't be seen with the same dress twice in succession. So what—what am I trying to say?

ROBERT F. BROWN: About your uncle, yeah.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: About what?

ROBERT F. BROWN: About your uncle. So he was—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Uncle Paul. Well, you probably can tell in my voice that we felt great reverence for him, because he definitely was—he was in the middle of the war. [00:34:10] At the beginning of the war, he was right up in the front lines, like that, in Belgium. He said, "We had to retreat. Why? Because the Germans were throwing children and women in front of our horses." He said, "We had to. We had to turn around." So Uncle Paul, he would—Aunt Elizabeth was with us a lot, simply because Uncle Paul was so busy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Travelling and—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: But she would come out to the country, and maybe spend a month with us, and then Uncle Paul would come for a couple of days, and then he'd go back to Washington. But it was a long trip to Washington. And it's—he was—well, we, of course, thought the world of him, Paul did. What—I'm trying to think of what he did that was important. [Laughs.] I don't know.

[Audio Break.]

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I did say something, though, that he did do, didn't I?

[Audio Break.]

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: —quite a lot of money from—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Borrowing money from the United States, yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned—how come—your father then went to France in 1918 with the YMCA. How did your father arrive at that decision, your own father, going to France? Did he feel he should do something for the war effort?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. He was very uncomfortable. [00:36:00] And my mother was saying all the time, "Solon, you don't need to. You don't need to. You're sending other relatives, and you should stay." And in a way, he went in the face of her disap—not disapproval, but she didn't—I think also she wasn't crazy about the idea of staying in the country alone. She was always a little afraid in the winter when we closed down, you know. Oh, my. But then Paul was 17 by that—16 and 17. He got into the Home Guard. And we were all—but now I've got to get back to that other that you asked me.

[Audio Break.]

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: He was an older man. He was 49.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And so that's why he went—you're right—into the YMCA. Was he trained in any way here before he went over?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: He went to Princeton for a weeks' training. And that is somewhere. I have the card. It's very interesting. He was taught how to call a meeting quickly, how to lead a meeting, and something about religion. Had a—a religious base.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he come back home before he went over?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. Because he went to Princeton, and—yeah. [00:37:56] And then—and then all we knew was that—because when he went over, the submarines were all over the place, you know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. So he was over in France for about a year, was he? 1918, 1919?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I think he went over a year, but only a few months during the war, because he got over in something like June, I think it was. And of course, I have all those dates. I should have looked at them, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, and then all his letters. And then the war ended in November.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. And then he was so elated. Oh, the letter that he wrote. [Claps.] He's so glad he's going to get home. And then he met Mr. Brinley. And Mr. Brinley had been over there doing painting of—for

ROBERT F. BROWN: For the military?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: For what?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he painting for the military?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: No, he—it was to paint—I'll have to come back to that, I think. I've sort of—it was very important work. You had to be a good artist.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. It might have been camouflage work.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah, that's it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: That's it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Camouflage. And he met Father. Father was through—it was in the fall, and he said, "I'm going home." And Mr. Brinley said, "Borglum, they want you over at the head office." [00:39:59] So Father, unsuspecting, went over to the head office, you know, of the—and there they said, "We have a job for you." So they were going to set up the school of American sculpture, I think, in Paris, to keep the boys busy until they could get boats to go home. Because it wasn't like today. You had to wait for your boat, and then pile into the boat, and then all the others had to stay around, [inaudible]. And so Father, he was glad that he could do something still. And he enjoyed that. He always liked Paris. And so he was able to get in touch with relatives, and he was able to make—make trips to Paris. Because they were on the outskirts. When I say Paris, they were just on the outskirts of Paris. They had to go into Paris.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So he taught. He set up a course in sculpture for the soldiers.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then when he got back, he continued with—he founded a school in 1920—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in New York. The School of American Sculpture.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, he realized that he enjoyed it. He felt that he had done it before because it was war work, but he felt he was successful. And so that's why he opened his school. They had nine pupils the day they opened, and at the end of the month, I think they had 40 or something like that. [00:42:02] They—they—really it was—well, it was his personality. He had such a charming personality, and his eyes would twinkle, and he would—I know one of the—I remember a little bit of this, because I knew several of the pupils, and I knew one of them said, "Oh, your father would come around, and he would look at what we were doing, and we knew that it wasn't very good. But he would say, 'Peg away. Peg away.'" And [laughs] we knew that peg away meant [laughs] we had a lot more work to do." [Laughs.] They loved him.

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —Monica Borglum Davies in Wilton, Connecticut. This is August 27, 1991.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were—you were telling me a little bit about Daniel Putnam Brinley, who was a longtime neighbor.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. He lived right down below there, in a little bit of a house. I'm sure he had to bend over [laughs] when he went from one room to the next.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Brinley was a very tall man, wasn't he?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. Very tall. He was—I don't know how—six feet—am I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Over six feet, I think.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well over six feet, yes. And his wife was so little.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was she?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: She was small and very dainty. And she spoke daintily, and he spoke in a very blustering sort of a way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, did he [laughs]?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. It was very interesting. I think they got to be that way because it's impressive. And oh, yes, I liked Put. What I—we all liked him well, in the early days, when he belonged to the Silvermine Group of Artists, which used to meet in this room—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. In your father's studio, yep.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: In Father's studio. He—well, he was a leader. He was a natural leader. Not only because of his size, but because of his talent. He was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Then they did—they built a more grand place, didn't they?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. I think Mrs. Brinley must have—one of them—somebody inherits money when you build. [They laugh.] [00:01:59] And so they did build over on the way to—over in the New—still in Silvermine, but in the direction of New Canaan. And I think Silvermine, by that time, was pretty well built up. Not the way you'd say that today, but in those days, people liked to have land around, and so they—they did build this Datchet house over there, and that was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Datchet house, yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. Very good-looking. And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would this have been after World War I, probably, say, in the 1920s or so?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, I don't know when it was. I don't quite remember. I'd have to figure that out. But uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your father—maybe we'll get—your father spent the last year of World War I in France. He was working with the Red Cross?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: No, YMCA.

ROBERT F. BROWN: YMCA.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I know lots of people make that mistake.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, they do. Yes, they do, as I did.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And, well, they just put it down. And it was not that. It was the YMCA. And he was over in France after the war, and in those days, you had to wait for space on a ship. And there were all these Americans. I imagine it was over 1,000. And so Father was stuck there. He wanted to get back and get to his work. [00:04:01] He'd put everything aside. But he had to stay. So Father, being the kind of person he was, started a school. It was a school—I don't recall what it was a school—but it was in—in Paris, and it was in—in the—Loie Fuller's apartment, because the dance area, you see, made an excellent space for the—the various students. And it was well-attended.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what—was it a school of, what, sculptural modeling, and—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Both. But it was a school for advanced art students. Father didn't want to teach beginners. There was a beginner's school at Beaune. B-[E]-A-U-N-E, I think it's spelled. I know nothing about it except that that's where the Americans who wanted to learn, the beginners, were. And I imagine there were plenty who were not beginners. But Father had a smaller group, rather select, I think, and these were established.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were these Americans, soldiers or former soldiers, or—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. They were Americans in uniform still. [00:05:51] And he—he arranged Paris tours for them, because he felt it was a marvelous opportunity for them to see Paris. And so Father—I don't know whether he took them, or whether—I think he arranged to have tours, and they could take these American students over around Paris and the outskirts of Paris, wherever they could go. A lot of the artwork was still hidden away under—I don't know whether it was under the sidewalk or what, but they—it was put in safekeeping, so that there's a lot that they did not see. But I think they—they enjoyed it, and I know Father had a good laugh, because he told someone that—who was going back to Washington, "Please arrange to have a skeleton sent over for me." Because Father always liked to draw from life, and you just had to have a skeleton. We used to have a skeleton in one of those closets there. [They laugh.] We used to scare friends, you know, as children. We'd open the door, and there was the skeleton. But they—the question came back, "Do you want a male or female skeleton?" Well, that—[they laugh] that really caused a lot of fun, because there's apparently no difference in a skeleton except the pelvis is, I think, a little larger or something in the female. [00:08:03] But apart from that, it's the same, if I remember correctly. So he got one, and they taught. And they—I think they had a good time. And then one-by-one, you know, they left and came back home.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did—did some of them keep in touch with your father—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —when they got back here?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. Yes, they did. Because you see, Father opened up his School of American Sculpture in New York, and I think he sent invitations or announcements to everybody he knew, and passed the

word around. There he had the—they were getting a lot. I—when he died, I remember they had—well, it—close to a hundred beginning to sign up. The ones who came—there were girls, very often well-to-do daughters. They would like to come. And then Father had an evening class, a very—of men, and it was also very popular, because the—the—the serious ones came. They didn't have any who just wanted to pass the time. And the day—with the day girls, many of them were just—you know, they'd take six months or something like that, and—but it—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you ever stop by the school and—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. We went in. [00:09:57] My mother had Friday afternoon teas. She—Father did—at first, the students would ask their friends to, "Come out and see what I'm doing. Come out and see the school," and all that. Father said, "No. I don't want any visitors when we're working." But we'll have a Friday afternoon open house, and then they can come, and we'll give them tea. So they liked that. And I remember the girls used to go down to a confectioner's shop and bring back cakes and things. That was not good for my father, because he ate too many, and had headaches.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's right. He suffered chronically from headaches, didn't he? Yeah.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah, I don't know why he should have, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. But did—at these teas, would your father talk about the work, or—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —or were they more social occasions?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I think both. I don't think that Father made a point of giving a talk or anything like that, but I think he'd walk around with parents or interested people, and show them this and that, and explain things. But I think it, sort of, flowed [laughs] in its own—on its own.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [They laugh.] Now, you said that you went—stopped in on the classes sometimes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, I didn't stop in. I went in with my mother, usually. But I didn't—not to the classes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: No. But to these—when they'd have tea in the afternoon. [00:12:01] I doubt if I was there more than once, because you see, Father died shortly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He—he opened the school in 1920, and he died in 19—early 1922, didn't he? Did you—what was—maybe you did hear about—what was his approach to teaching? How did he teach? Did he—would he demonstrate, or what—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, I suppose there was something in the way of blocking out the beginning, but he did not like to tell them. He liked them to do what they felt was the right way of doing it. And then Father would go around and—and correct or criticism. I don't remember ever seeing him actually touch their work. I don't think he would do that. I think he would tell them, but they would have to take up their modeling to—and do it themselves. He was quite—I think he was quite—quite certain about not wanting to—to—to put his fingers on their work, because I think he felt, if he did any work like that, then they might leave it, whereas if the modeling changed or something, you know, they would have to erase what he did and do something differently. [00:14:01] It—of course, I'm using my recollection to the stiffest, highest point, because I didn't—I only went in a few times. But I know Father did bring us in. We knew the Ashleys who lived on Lexington Avenue, and for years and years, we had a room, top room in their house, so that anytime, if Father couldn't make it home at night, he would go there to sleep. And if Mother wanted to come in, or if she wanted to bring us in, we could go there. We could sleep in that nice big room. It was good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, he—your father wrote a book, didn't he?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did that come out about that time?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: After he died. It's posthumous.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this is the book. It's called, what, *Sound Construction*.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. [Laughs.] That—now, that is very typical of my father. *Sound*—see, it's a book

about art, but he—*Construction*. And I can recall, in this room, the pages of that book. Each page was drawn—I don't know where it is. I—it—I hope I may find it in the loft when we're up there, but I don't know. But I do remember that these were yellow pages, about that long—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, quite large.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. And about—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sort of wide, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Large. And so they were tacked up all around here. [00:16:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: On the studio walls, yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. And then I—he would have people look at them or study them. I remember he had his friend, Mr. Chamberlain [ph]—I forget his first name—come out and, you know, give him advice. He wanted—he had his ideas, and—so I don't really know what was the result, but I do know Chamberlain came out and checked over everything that was to be—before it was published. Because when Father died, the book was ready to be published. They didn't touch a thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, why do you say that his title, *Sound Construction*, is very typical? Why do you say that?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: [Laughs.] Well, because he believed so profoundly in accuracy of—like, if he were making a figure of a man, as far as you can see, that's pretty accurate. And it's well-constructed. And it'll stand up. His work never needed—I don't think ever needed a braystone, and the same with that *Buffalo Dancer* up there. It does have that blanket in the back, and—but I believe that if you took the blanket away, that figure would still stand in that pose.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's balanced within itself, yes. Yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. He was very, very strict about that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. And it was typical of him to use a blunt phrase like "sound construction."

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. I could get the book for you, if you want to look at it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure, I'll look at it—not right—yes, I'd like to.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: It's just in the other room.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he a man—would you say your father was a man of few words, well-chosen words, or was he [00:18:00]—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. Yeah. But he liked to talk, and he talked easily. Now, he gave lectures. I remember he—that's how he—I went to [laughs] private school because he'd give these talks. Of course, I nearly died of embarrassment, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] You mean, you'd have to—you'd go to these talks.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, the whole school would be there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: He'd come and give a talk on art and different things, and—[they laugh]. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you ever think of going into becoming an artist yourself?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I don't think so. I know that he would have liked me to, or my brother. I think that he was very disappointed that neither of us—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —really wanted to?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, it doesn't often happen that children go in—does it—into their father's work. But Father was—and yet he was very—I think he was very well-liked. He had the girls, usually, during the day, and I think they paid about \$50 a month. But whatever it was, it was high for that time. Maybe it was more than 50.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he very—do you—is your impression that he was very patient with them, even though they were not particularly serious about being artists, the girls during the daytime? Did he have a lot of patience with them?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I don't know enough to answer that, you know, correctly, because I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Now, where—was the school down—in what part of Manhattan was the school?
[00:20:01]

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Nine East 59. Fifty-ninth Street was—I think it's sort of the art street.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And 57th Street.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And 57. Fifty-seven and 59. And this was nine 59[th Street], was where the last address was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, he had—in his last years, he had some important commissions for the Church of St. Mark's in the Bowery, didn't he? How did those commissions come about? Was he a particular friend of the minister there?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: William—Dr. William Norman Guthrie. Well, I think probably. Probably they came about because Guthrie, actually, had a hard time pushing this through into the church curriculum, because at that time, a church—all churches were pretty conventional.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was it that he—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: To bring art, and bring—they had—that little figure over there of a nude woman, that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —he wanted to have for the church?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: He bought it. Father—I remember Father felt badly about that, because he was overseas when Mother sold it, and he really wanted to ke—that he—he loved that figure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What is that figure called?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: *The Waters*. And—but someone else, when it got down to St. Marks in the Bowery. You're supposed to pronounce it the "boory" [ph]—that's the Dutch way, the "boory." [They laugh.] [00:21:57] What I don't know there—I don't know. What was I going to say? Mother—Father was sorry that she sold it. He really wanted that to be something in his studio, but it went down, and that's where it is now. But it was outside, and part of it got broken, and I don't know—I'd like to go down sometime and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He also, I guess, for this same Dr. Guthrie, did some Indians, some sculpture of Indians?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. And one represents aspiration, and it's a very crude figure of an Indian. It's the first Indians who get that feeling that they want to be better and better the world, and, I mean—well, maybe not the world, but they—they get that inspiration to do more and to be more. Now, wait a minute. And then *Aspiration*—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, that was *Aspiration*, you said.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah, that's *Aspiration*. *Inspiration*—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is it, what, a more finished figure?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: It's awful. I—*Inspiration*. This shows the, you know, rather crude features of a person, and it—you could see how he's trying to lift himself up out. And at the bottom, there is a little—I don't remember what kind of an animal. [00:24:03] But it represents a little wild animal, and he's pushing himself up. And I think you're—you have that feeling.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], you sure did.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. And then *Inspiration*—goodness, I haven't seen—[laughs] oh—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: These were—*Inspiration* and *Aspiration* were among the last commissions that he had.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And they were from Dr. Guthrie of—of the church.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah, that's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And they're—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: They weren't understood. I don't know how people feel about them now, but they just felt it was awful, because—I don't consider this person naked, but they did. They felt it was awful to have a naked man in the church. But there were always—I know as my mother once said, "We don't mind if people criticize. In fact, we like it, because it gives an opportunity for those who really know to come forward and defend." So people would defend and say, Well, this is how it is. This is life. And we mustn't push life out simply because maybe at one time or another, it's crude or unbeautiful, so on. It's—I wish—Father did give lectures, and sometime, I'd like to get over—go over them, because they're worth studying. [00:25:59]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, your father's illness came upon him fairly suddenly, didn't he? What was it? Was it—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, he—yeah. It was really as a result of these parties. The—the girls would bring in French pastries. There was a wonderful little French pastry down—shop on Madison Avenue, and they'd bring a load of these things, and—because Father loved them. My mother followed Father's father's direction. "Don't let Solon eat rich foods. He can't eat—he can't digest them," and so on. So we were very strict. But the minute Father got away from the house, hey! And of course, the girls loved to spoil him, and it—and then he'd eat these things, and he'd have a bad headache the next day. No, it was sad.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did your father—you mentioned a little earlier the criticisms of some of these works. Did your father take criticism fairly well? Did he welcome criticism? You said your mother did.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, I think Father, he was polite, I mean, but—about it, but he probably defended what he was doing, or—he wouldn't so much defend it as explain. It might send him off into a kind of a lecture, in which he would give a long talk on the meaning of what he was doing. [00:28:00] He was always following the truth, going straight to nature, never being influenced by another man's work. I think he did enough to prove that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, after—after your father died, what were your—your mother's plans for his work? Was there quite a lot of work that she had to do something with? Were there commissions that weren't—that just were hanging?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, one or two, but you see, it was right after the war. Things had come to a standstill anyway, before Father died. And—but our friends were so insistent that Mother should keep on going, and have these exhibitions in the fall, so I remember we did have a big open house, exhibition.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Here at the studio.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. This studio was back there by the road, you know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And I think my—my mother was very spunky, because she adopted Father's ideas. And Father was—he was trying to put art up on a new course, not just, sort of, following—

UNIDENTIFIED WOMEN: Hi, Monica!

[Audio Break.]

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes. She was a great help to my father. [00:30:00] And I can remember they would talk, really, into the night about subjects that had come up, because in the—when the colony was busy. There were some people who were very conventional, and—and I don't—I don't think Father was happy about all of them. Now, I don't really—I don't really know, at this time. I wish I could list, but probably it has no place here anyway.

ROBERT F. BROWN: List what?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, the different artists, like Brinley, Put Brinley, and Hildebrandt. Are you seeing any of his relatives?

ROBERT F. BROWN: We might, sure. You've mentioned some of these before. But these people all encouraged

your mother to carry on.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did his reputation—did his renown continue, your father, after his death, would you say?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Hard for me to say. Actually, the Guild was started in the fall.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Silvermine Guild.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Guild was started that very fall of 1922?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: That very fall, yeah. Father died in the end of January. And the Guild was the answer, really, to anybody who criticized Father and his work. I'm not sure that Father would have been happy in the Guild. I'm not sure. [00:31:58] But then, I think Father had his followers. I think they would have stayed with him. I don't think the Guild—it might not have been formed. I'm not sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But what—what do you mean by, The Guild was the answer to Father and his work? What did you mean by that? You mean it carried on some of his beliefs?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, Father believed that this was an art colony. I think he wanted it to be like the colonies—he'd lived in France, you know, for about five years. And the—if I—I'm quite sure I'm correct in saying that in France, in the country, the artists did gather together, and I think in a way, that was Father's plan, because here, they came here, and Silvermine was just, at that time, chock full of artists. And then they had to move over, like Mr. Brinley and Hildebrandt, toward New Canaan. And also, I think Mr. Thayer had a beautiful house there. And I think there was a little bit of wanting to be near Mr. Thayer's lovely estate, because both the Brinleys and the Hildebrandts, particularly, really, bordered his estate. Brinley was not quite close.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So people began moving out of Silvermine itself, a little toward New Canaan.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. I don't know whether they were moving out so much as, new people who came in would build toward New Canaan, I think. [00:34:05]

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you were around here—you were at school, of course, in Boston, I think, and then—but you were around here—otherwise, you were around here with your mother.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, I went to school in Silvermine, the little—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you were—in the 1920s, you were around Silvermine quite a bit, then.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. Well, we were in Silvermine right up until when I was married.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you were married in, what, in the late '20s? 1920—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: I think I was married about 1925, I think. And then—but we stayed here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I think at that time, you would sometimes go to New York and see about having your father's work exhibited.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes. We had a beautiful big exhibit of Father's work at the Union League Club, because they never let a woman put a foot inside of that [they laugh] club, but I can remember, I was there. And—and on two or three occasions, and helped with—plan this, really, quite a nice large exhibition, with tea—I think they had tea or something. Anyway—but it's a men's club. It was—it still exists, doesn't it, the Union League? Now I think there's one in Philadelphia. Isn't there one—another one? Well, it's—I was very ignorant, and I was just about 18, I think. [00:36:01] I don't know how I ever did step into that situation, because it really required a more sophisticated person than I ever was. But I think we got Mother—Mother was very good. She was—she was very—I think she was—she was trained naturally, I guess. She spoke a beautiful English, with a French sort of a lilt to it. But you see, as children, they had lived in England during the—what is it—the Franco-Prussian War or something.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So she was—did any of his family help out, that is, any of his brothers help out after he

died?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, yes. You see, Uncle August Borglum was married to my mother's sister.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Lucy, right?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Lucy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's right.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: And they were very close. Very, very close. And they came here every summer for about a month. Uncle August and Aunt Lucy had a music school in Omaha, and also Aunt Lucy—I think she gave French lessons. And she was more—they were—it was a more sophisticated home. This home was definitely different. And yet, they loved coming here, and I think they envied Mother's position, because our home was very active, always people dropping in at all times of day and evening. [00:38:05] And I can remember, there was a wooden sort of a porch thing along the outside of the building. Well, that side.

ROBERT F. BROWN: On the back side, perhaps.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: It was really on this side, but it's not there. Father must have put it—Father put it in. It was a wooden—and I think it would be—it would come out about 10 feet. All—a good part of that way. And that's where—and then he'd open up those big doors, those doors.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The big barn doors, yes.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. And sit—we'd sit out there in the evening. Oh, yeah. And then we children would go to bed, and the house would be—you see, it would be—and we had Father build a sleeping porch, so we could sleep—be out on the sleeping porch, and we didn't hear what people said, but we could hear them talking.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you think your aunt and uncle rather envied your—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yes, I do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —family's informal way of living.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, not so much—I think they—I think they envied the natural popularity of my father and mother in this village, because they were more formal, whereas here, as I said, people were never—Mother had her day at home. I think it was Sunday afternoon. I think that was—in those days, all the wives had an at-home day, and I think Mother's was Sunday afternoon. And people would come, and she would serve tea, and—but Father, I don't know. [00:40:01] He loved people, and people loved him. And Uncle August was a very good-looking man. And I don't know how to compare them, really, but he was a very handsome person, and a musician. Well, I remember one time, one summer, the Aeolian, I think it was, loaned him a nice grand piano for the whole summer, had it here. And so we had, really, evenings with that grand piano. I think it only happened about once, and then the war came and everything. But Mother had an upright. She sang. She had a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about the other brother, the other—the sculptor, Gutzon. Did he—was he around here very much?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh. Oh, well, he was just over in Stamford.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He didn't live very far away.

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you see quite a bit of him growing up, or—I know there was a certain tension, wasn't there, for—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: There was, yes. We saw quite a lot of Aunt Mary. She was a little pathetic, I always felt. But she used to come—she was always trying to get the two families together. But I don't think that—I have to, kind of, think back. Uncle—of course, I hate to say this. My mother was—sort of didn't trust Uncle Gutzon. [00:42:01] He would get a commission in his direction, when it was headed for Father, that sort of thing. So she'd always say—I can hear her say that—"Solon, don't talk about your work to Gutzon. Don't talk about it." But Father was very—what is the word—he was very open. He just—he would talk about his work.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, did Gutzon ask him questions, or—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Yeah. If there was a commission in the air, oh, and it was headed for Father—but he wouldn't do a thing to try to get it to come—and Uncle Gutzon, you see, always had too much work. He never could finish his work. Half the time, he'd start something, and then something better would come along, and he'd drop it. And he had a bad reputation for that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah. What was it—as a young person, what would you—how would you describe his personality, your Uncle Gutzon? What was he—how did he strike you?

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: As a young person—how did he strike—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or even as an older person, let's say. How did he strike you, in general? Was he friendly, was he open, was he—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or was he calculating, or—

MONICA BORGLUM DAVIES: Well, yeah, in a—in a way that was hidden. [00:44:01] Oh, yes, he—but maybe I'm inheriting too much of my mother's fear, because Mother was afraid of him. Because there were cases when he very definitely came between Father and a good commission, very definite. I know that. But Uncle Gutzon, he was very good-looking, you know, artist, and very popular. He spoke very well. He was a good speaker. And I think he was better than Father as a speaker, although they both did. But I think Uncle Gutzon was better.

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